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Not Blaming You, President Says Reagan Telephones Carter on Beirut Remarks

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President Reagan yesterday telephoned former President Jimmy Carter and offered assurances that he did not intend to blame Carter or his administration for last week's suicide bomb attack in Beirut in which two Americans were killed, a White House official said.

Reagan made the call after Carter and a host of Democrats, including presidential nominee Walter F. Mondale, criticized Reagan for blaming the Lebanon bombing on "the near destruction of our intelligence capability" by previous administrations.

The White House official said Reagan telephoned Carter at his home in Plains, Ga., and spoke to him for four minutes.

According to the official, Reagan told Carter: "I was not suggesting that you or your administration were responsible for the declining intelligence capability and I certainly did not suggest that your administration was the cause of that happening at the embassy in Beirut."

The official said Reagan was not offering Carter an apology but an "explanation" of his comments.

According to the official, Reagan told Carter that his remarks were "misinterpreted and he was referring to the decade-long decline in human intelligence-gathering capability."

"He just wanted Carter to understand what he meant by his statement and could understand how the former president may have misunderstood his remarks, the official said.

The official said he did not know how Carter responded. The former president complained Thursday that Reagan's remarks were "personally insulting and . . . gross."

Reagan on Thursday had claimed that his comments on the bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut had been "distorted" by the press, and the White House announced that Reagan did not intend

to pin the blame on Carter alone for intelligence cutbacks in the 1970s or link those cuts to the Beirut attack.

Answering a student's question about embassy security at Bowling Green State University during an Ohio campaign swing Wednesday, Reagan said:

"The real protection, and where we're feeling the effect today of the near destruction of our intelligence capability in recent years before we came here—the effort that somehow to say, well, spying is somehow dishonest and let's get rid of our intelligence agents. And we did that to a large extent.

"Your biggest protection is to and we're trying to rebuild our intelligence to where you'll find out and know in advance what the target might be and be prepared for it."

A White House aide said Wednesday that Reagan was referring to the Carter years. But spokesman Larry Speakes

said Thursday that Reagan was talking about a decade-long trend in Congress that resulted in "inadequate" funding and support for human intelligence-gathering.

The Carter years saw a shift from human intelligence-gathering and toward development of high technology.

Meanwhile yesterday, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved legislation providing \$366 million for improving security at U.S. embassies. The administration had asked for the additional funds, then requested an emergency appropriation of \$110 million and said it will seek the rest in January.

Several senators questioned the decision to seek \$110 million now, and the panel approved the full amount. "If there are some false economies here that will affect our security program, we want to know about them and make our own judgment . . .," said Sen. Charles McC. Mathias Jr. (R-Md.).